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171142Z Aug 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 07 TEL AVIV 005091

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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Gaza and Northern West Bank Disengagement

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Key stories in the media:  
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All media, including the electronic ones, which broadcast at unusual hours, reported that the forced eviction of the Gaza settlers has begun. Early this afternoon, Jerusalem Post's web site reported that ten settlements are being evacuated, with a focus on Morag and Neve Dekalim. Security forces poured into Neve Dekalim on Tuesday, convincing several dozen families to leave. On Tuesday and today, there were several violent incidents in clashes between security forces, and settlers and their supporters. Speaking soon after an incident in which a female soldier who entered Morag was stabbed and lightly wounded, PM Sharon beseeched settlers during a joint press conference with President Moshe Katsav not to attack soldiers and police removing them from their homes, declaring that opponents of the disengagement plan should "not hurt them, rather hurt me."

Jerusalem Post quoted a "White House spokeswoman" in Crawford, Tex. as saying that President Bush "supports Prime Minister Sharon in this bold initiative and believes this will strengthen Israel." The newspaper reported that Sharon received messages of praise from British PM Tony Blair and Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan, while Malaysia described the withdrawal as a "first small step."

Ha'aretz reported that U.S. security coordinator Lt. Gen. William Ward met on Tuesday at the Gaza Strip's Karni Crossing with the heads of the PA security forces deployed near settlements. Ha'aretz reported that PA Interior Ministry spokesman Tawfiq Abu Husa told the newspaper that at the meeting, Ward looked at "the deployment of the forces and their capabilities, down to the smallest details," and their readiness. The newspaper quoted Abu Husa and other Palestinian security figures as saying Tuesday that the Palestinian police have deployed most of their forces in the central and southern Gaza Strip where most of the disengagement process is underway. Ha'aretz notes that the Palestinians also have 400 security men stationed in the northern Strip. Leading media reported that the PA and Hamas are preparing for a struggle for control over the Gush Katif area. Yediot reported that A/S David Welch "secretly" visited Gaza, where he told the heads of the PA security forces that they must cooperate with Israel during the disengagement move. Yediot also quoted a senior State Department official as conveying a similar idea Tuesday in Washington: "Welch's message is very important: the Palestinians must cooperate with the Israeli security branches in order for the disengagement to be implemented without hitches or violence."

PA Civilian Affairs Minister Muhammad Dahlan was quoted as saying in an interview with Maariv that he perceives optimism among the Palestinian population. He dismissed the settlers' pain, praised Sharon's courage, and asked Israelis to free themselves of their "occupation mentality."

Ha'aretz reported that on Tuesday, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak told a visiting delegation from the Labor Party, including former PM Ehud Barak, and Knesset

Members Danny Yatom and Colette Avital, that he hoped the pullout from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank would end peacefully, adding that disengagement would favorably affect not only relations between Israel and the Palestinians, but also Israel's relations with the international community. The newspaper quoted Mubarak as saying at the meeting that Egypt will do all it can to prevent arms smuggling along the Philadelphia route, but that the closure could not be "hermetic." Mubarak was quoted as saying in an interview with Yediot that he understands the difficulty inherent in leaving one's home. Israel Radio quoted Jordan's King Abdullah II as saying in Moscow that Israel is acting in earnest. Citing AP, Ha'aretz quoted the King as saying on Tuesday, before he left for Russia, that he opposes settling more Palestinian refugees in his country amid Arab fears that Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip may not extend to the West Bank.

Jerusalem Post and Hatzofe quoted IDF Intelligence chief Maj. Gen. Aharon Ze'evi-Farkash as saying Tuesday before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that the Palestinians might resume terror activities in the spring of 2006 if they do not see a diplomatic horizon and if Israel insists on the dismantling of the terror infrastructure. Jerusalem Post reported that Abu Abeer, a spokesman for the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) told the newspaper at a PRC meeting in Gaza City that the PRC will not continue attacks after the withdrawal. The PRC, an alliance of various armed militias, were responsible for attacks on Sderot and on soldiers and settlers in the Gaza Strip.

All major media reported that on Tuesday, U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Defense Minister Shaul

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Mofaz signed a joint statement that says: "The strategic alliance between the United States and Israel reflects common understandings of the global security environment. In this cooperative relationship, the United States and Israel share information and consult on possible threats to U.S. and Israeli defense interests. The U.S. Department of Defense and the Israeli Ministry of Defense have signed an understanding that is designed to remedy problems of the past that seriously affected the technology security relationship between their defense establishments and begins to restore confidence in the technology security area. In the coming months, additional steps will be taken to restore confidence fully." The joint statement adds that the "signing of this understanding underscores the commitment of the U.S. and Israel to work together to address global security challenges. Cooperation between the U.S. and Israel is important to the security of the Middle East and we expect that cooperation to continue." Israel Radio notes that the understanding does not grant a right of veto to the U.S., which will however be informed about Israel's arms deals. The station says that the full document is confidential and that its details will not be released to the media. Ha'aretz reported that the U.S. will continue to blacklist Defense Ministry D-G Amos Yaron.

Jerusalem Post reported that France has threatened to halt financial and humanitarian aid to the PA unless a French journalist who was kidnapped in Gaza City earlier this week is freed unharmed.

Citing Reuters, Ha'aretz reported that on Tuesday, Hizbullah hailed Israel's evacuation of settlements as another victory for armed resistance.

Yediot and Jerusalem Post reported that the court hearings in the matter of Pentagon "mole" Larry Franklin and former AIPAC staff members Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman began on Tuesday in Alexandria, Va. Jerusalem Post reported that Rosen and Weissman pleaded not guilty to charges of unlawfully receiving classified defense information.

Ha'aretz and Jerusalem Post printed an AP story, according to which nearly 125 Israeli and Arab former Seeds of Peace campers, now in their twenties, have gathered in Otisfield, Maine, for the first reunion in the camp's 13-year history.

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Gaza and Northern West Bank Disengagement:  
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Summary:  
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Veteran op-ed writer and the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assistant Eytan Haber opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "We should wholeheartedly wish [the evacuated settlers] success in their new lives, under the shadow and management of Israeli governments that don't behave stupidly."

Deputy Editor-in-Chief Avi Bettelheim wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "The settlers deserve warm gratitude ... from all Israeli citizens.... But it is now over -- although this came very, very late."

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "After two days of excessive consideration, in which degraded police officers were conducting negotiations over leaving the area in exchange for momentary quiet, the time has come for a reversal. All future expressions of weakness will cause the entire operation to fail."

Senior op-ed writer Uzi Benziman commented in Ha'aretz: "Violent eccentrics crop up on the margins of every society, and if many from the mainstream of the settler public join forces with them, Israel will find itself in a heap of trouble."

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Though our enemies are rejoicing at the suffering of the settlers, they will rejoice even more if we decide to tear ourselves apart."

European Union Representative in Israel Ramiro Cibrian-Uzal wrote in Maariv: "While the disengagement's security aspects are still highly important, Mr. James Wolfensohn is leading the civilian and economic front in the name of the Quartet and with the European Union's full support."

Block Quotes:  
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#### I. "H-Hour With a Torn Heart"

Veteran op-ed writer and the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assistant Eytan Haber opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (August 17): "Encouraged by [successive] Israeli governments, devout and enthusiastic people came to a barren region; for a generation, they built houses, planted trees, created a blooming garden with their sweat -- and blood. They were always told that they were the 'salt of the earth'; they are now being humiliated like the lowliest members of society, and are required to smile in front of the cameras. As far as they are concerned, today will be a fateful day. In army lingo, this is the 'H-Hour' of evacuation. We should wholeheartedly wish them success in their new lives, under the shadow and management of Israeli governments that don't behave stupidly."

#### II. "A Time For Sobering Up"

Deputy Editor-in-Chief Avi Bettelheim wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (August 17): "Gush Katif was born in sin.... [But] the settlers deserve warm gratitude ... from all Israeli citizens. They were there, endangered their lives, but weren't despondent. They endured thousands of mortar shells that landed next to them or on their ground, and didn't flee. They lost relatives, friends, and neighbors, but they didn't lose their mental strength.... But it is now over -- although this came very, very late."

#### III. "And Now, Determination"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (August 17): "It is not reasonable to arrive at August 17 while most of the resident population of Gush Katif is still sitting at home. It is not reasonable to complain to the Disengagement Administration for not proposing solutions to the residents, when most Gush Katif residents avoided all contact with the administration for months.... When people say the settlers, up to the last minute, have not internalized the evacuation, what they are essentially saying is that they have done well at internalizing the fact that all their desires are usually fulfilled, and rightly believed that this time too they would have the upper hand. They do not hang their hopes on the heavens, but on the weakness of the government in contrast to their own determination. After two days of excessive consideration, in which degraded police officers were conducting negotiations over leaving the area in exchange for momentary quiet, the time has come for a

reversal. All future expressions of weakness will cause the entire operation to fail."

#### IV. "It Doesn't Stop at Orange"

Senior op-ed writer Uzi Benziman commented in Ha'aretz (August 17): "Today the extent of the violent opposition to the implementation of the disengagement plan will become clear: are we talking about a minority of youngsters, or a sizable ideological camp motivated by the power of fanatic religious faith? If the first option proves correct, it will be possible to heave a sigh of relief, despite the flammable potential it, too, contains: violent eccentrics crop up on the margins of every society, and if many from the mainstream of the settler public join forces with them, Israel will find itself in a heap of trouble. In any event, the entire Israeli society will have to give some thought to the day after: how will those who believe with every fiber of their being that withdrawal from the territories is tantamount to pulverizing the Zionist foundation on which the state lives go on living together with those who are convinced that continued occupation destroys the Zionist vision?"

#### V. "A Test of Our Society"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (August 17): "Today will be a painful day, no matter how it and the next few days turn out. Today the police and soldiers will knock on the doors of the residents of Gush Katif, citizens who have withstood almost five years of terrorism only to be evicted by their own government. As each settlement is emptied of its inhabitants, we should have no sense of victory.... We assume that the vast majority of the residents of Gush Katif who remain would not think of physically harming a soldier or policeman.... It would be better if they did not take out their anger on the security forces.... As difficult as it is to put the genie back in the bottle once entire communities have rejected the legitimacy of government decisions and even equated the government with the worst enemies of the Jewish people, we nevertheless hope that the line against violence will be sharply drawn. It is not too late for every rabbi, community leader and family to appeal to those apocalyptically inclined, like the Jewish IDF deserter who murdered four people in Shfaram, to reject violence.... Indeed, though our enemies are rejoicing at the suffering of the settlers, they will rejoice even more if we decide to tear ourselves apart."

#### VI. "Europe Believes in Prosperity"

European Union Representative in Israel Ramiro Cibrian-Uzal wrote in Maariv (August 17): "As an observer of the events that have occurred in recent weeks, I believe that the State of Israel is undergoing one of the hardest and most challenging periods in its history.... The international Quartet, in which the European Union plays a key role, is acting energetically to ensure that the 'day after' [disengagement] won't be a day of chaos and anxiety, but one that contains a promise for both Israelis and Palestinians.... While the disengagement's security aspects are still highly important, Mr. James Wolfensohn is leading the civilian and economic front in the name of the Quartet and with the European Union's full support.... Confidence-building measures will help both sides regain the trust needed in order to return to the full implementation of commitments they undertook at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, and meet their obligations under the 'road map' -- with all the difficulties this entails."

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